DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 452 532 CS 217 392

TITLE	Folktales for Family Fun. Parents and Children Together Series.
INSTITUTION	ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading, English, and Communication, Bloomington, IN.; Family Learning Association, Bloomington, IN.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
ISBN	ISBN-1-883790-80-8
PUB DATE	2001-00-00
NOTE	71p.; Accompanying audiotapes not available from ERIC. For other books in the series, see CS 217 390-399.
CONTRACT	ED-99-CO-0028
AVAILABLE FROM	ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading, English, and Communication, Indiana University, 2805 E. 10th Street, Suite 140, Bloomington, IN 47408-2698. Web site: http://eric.indiana.edu/. Family Learning Association, 3925 Hagan St., Suite 101, Bloomington, IN 47401. Web site: http://eric.indiana.edu/.
PUB TYPE	Creative Works (030) -- Guides - Non-Classroom (055) -- ERIC Publications (071)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Elementary Education; *Fairy Tales; Folk Culture; *Legends; *Parent Student Relationship; *Reading Aloud to Others; *Reading Habits
IDENTIFIERS	*Family Activities; *Folktales

ABSTRACT

This book, one of a series, presents information and books about folklore, as well as the article, "Parenting's Best-Kept Secret: Reading to Your Children" by Barbara Bush, which suggests steps to start a family read-aloud program. The message of the series urges parents and children to spend time together, talk about stories, and learn together. The first part of each book presents stories appropriate for varying grade levels, both younger children and those in grades three and four, and each book presents stories on a particular theme. The Read-along Stories in this book are: "The Fox and the Quail" (as retold by Michael Shermis); "The Bored Wizard" (Carolyn Kane); and "The Day Sweeney Ate the Worms" (Casey West). On an accompanying audiotape, the stories are performed as radio dramas, allowing children to read along. The second half of each book provides ideas and guidelines for parents, as well as activities and books for additional reading. This book suggests folklore related activities, including: acting out legends and folktales; rewriting folktales from another character's point of view; interviewing grandparents or older neighbors; and visiting local places associated with legends or tales. Contains 24 references. (EF)

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Parents and Children Together SERIES

FOLKTALES FOR FAMILY FUN

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Includes "Parenting's Best-Kept Secret: Reading to Your Children" by Barbara Bush

PLUS

Read-along Stories:

The Fox and the Quail

The Bored Wizard

The Day Sweeney Ate the Worms

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Guidance and fun for parents and children, ages 4–9

This book has a companion audio tape also entitled "Folktales for Family Fun." Occasionally there are directions on the tape that do not appear in the book or headings in the book that aren't spoken on the tape.

Parents and Children Together SERIES
Published by **ERIC** Clearinghouse on Reading, English, and Communication
and ***The Family Learning Association***
3925 Hagan St., Suite 101, Bloomington, IN 47401
1-800-759-4723 • www.kidscanlearn.com

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Published by
ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading, English, and Communication
Indiana University, 2805 East 10th Street
Bloomington, Indiana 47408-2698
Carl B. Smith, Director
and
The Family Learning Association
3925 Hagan Street, Suite 101
Bloomington, IN 47401

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Copy Editor: Wendy Hodina
Production Editor: Lanny Thomas

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This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Education under contract number ED-99-CO-0028. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

Introduction

Get together with your children. Talk about stories and learn together. That's the message of this series of books, ***Parents and Children Together***.

You will find here several stories that you and your children can read together and talk about in a relaxed way. Some stories are more appropriate for younger children, some for children in grades three and four. Have fun with them but also use them as a way of guiding your child's thinking.

Before each story, you will be prompted to focus your attention. After the story, review some of the issues in a relaxed conversation. Please feel comfortable in making comments or asking questions when the two of you are reading a story together. Have fun along the way. The stories are performed as radio dramas on the accompanying audiotape. That gives your child a chance to read along with the voices on the tape.

In the second half of this book and on one side of the audio tape there are ideas and guidelines for the interested parent. On the topic of this particular volume you will find hints, practice activities, and books for further reading. If you want to use the tape as a way of preparing for reading with your child or in helping your child study, the tape gives you an opportunity to listen while you are driving or jogging.

For more ideas on any of the topics in this Series, visit ***www.kidscanlearn.com*** or ***http://eric.indiana.edu***

SO HOW IS YOUR PORRIDGE?
BREATH MINTS!?
GOLDFISH SOUP... HAM & BATS... AH, HERE WE GO... HANSEL & GRETEL, 450°!...
Better Homes & Witchcraft
COOKING

Getting Started

In this little book you will learn about folktales and then share the fun with your children through various books and activities. You will also find an article entitled "Parenting's Best-Kept Secret: Reading to Your Children" by former First Lady Barbara Bush.

On Side B of the tape there are three read-along stories. We encourage you to listen to these stories and to read them with your children so you can share in the excitement of story reading. Of course, your child can listen to the stories alone, if you wish.

> Before reading each story, talk about the title or the things that might happen in the story. Then, after the story is finished, talk about it again. By the way, it's okay to stop the tape to answer your child's questions, to talk about something funny or exciting that happens in the story, or to discuss the story by asking questions, like "What would it be like if all the animals lived in peace?" or "Has someone made you do something you really didn't want to do?" These discussions help make reading come alive and create an interaction between you and your child.

Part I
Read-along Stories

The Fox and the Quail

a folktale from Russia
retold by Michael Shermis

Things to Do *before* Reading the Story

A quail is a bird that is often hunted for food. Draw a picture of a fox and a quail.

One day a fox caught a quail in the forest. "I am going to eat you!" said the fox to the quail.

"Don't eat me, Fox, for I am old and tough," said the quail, shaking. "If you let me go, I will lead you to my children. They are young and tender.

"All right," said the fox, "but tell me where your children are hidden."

"They are in the bushes over there," said the quail in a quivering voice. "Go call to them three times in my voice and they will come to you. This is how I call them:

'Come out, little kiddies, to your mommy dear! Everything is all right and the coast is clear!' "

The fox let the quail go, and crept quietly up to the bushes. He was so excited about this delicious dinner, however, that he forgot how the rhyme went. He began to whistle like a quail: "Come, little kiddies, the coast is clear!" But the call was not quite right because he could not remember the rest.

Just then the fox looked up and saw that the old quail had picked up a rock. The quail dropped the rock on the fox's head.

"Ha! Ha! Silly, silly fox! Now all you have is rocks!" laughed the happy quail, as she spread her wings and flew away.

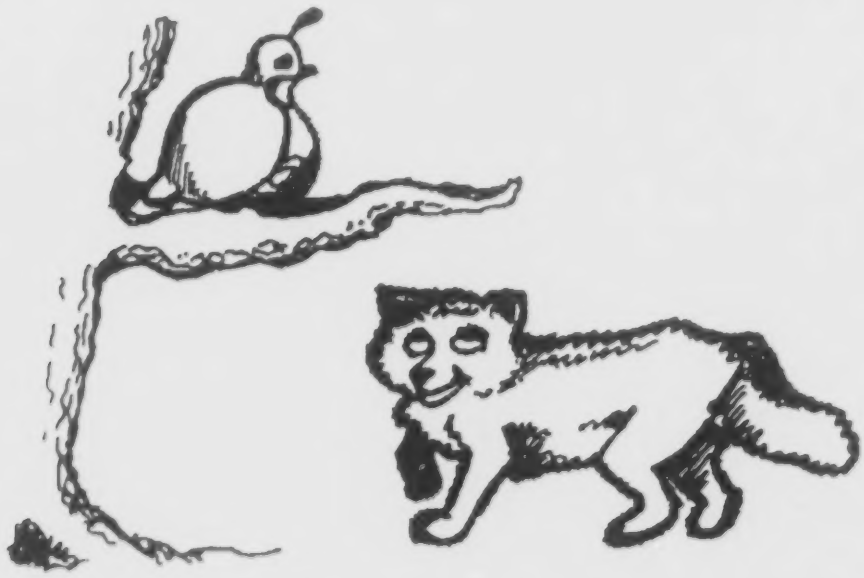
So the fox was left with nothing, except a headache.

A short time later the fox was walking along the edge of the forest, and what should he spy but the quail sitting in a tree. The fox could think only of revenge.

"Quail," he said sweetly, "have you heard what God just said?"

"No, I haven't," answered the quail, "what did God say?"

The fox smiled and said: "God has decided that all the animals and birds shall live together in peace and love from now on, and no more hurting each other for any reason! We must make peace, you and I. Come down out of the tree, little friend, and let me hug you like a sister!"



The quail did not answer, but she began turning her head from side to side.

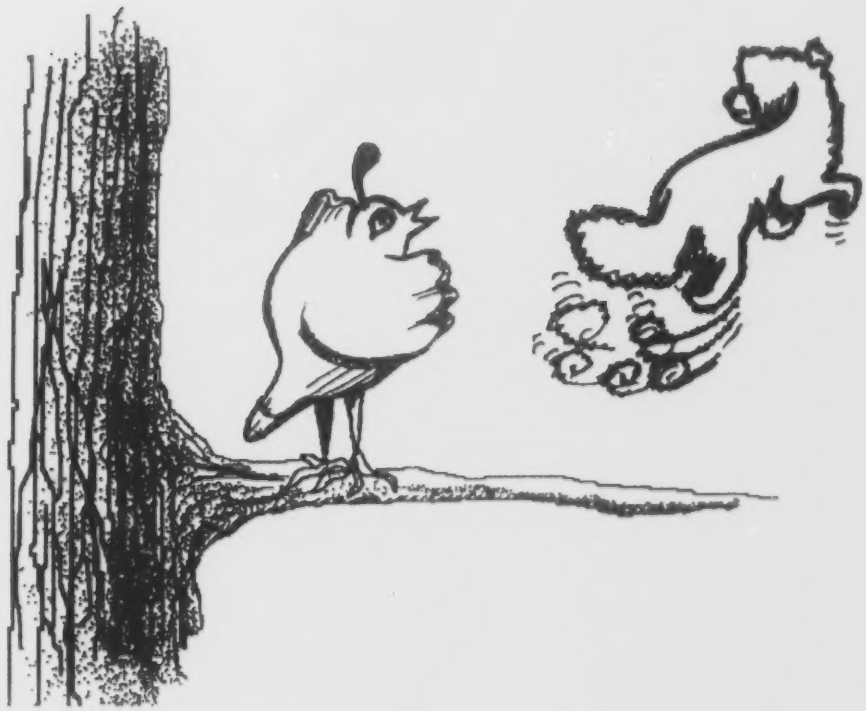
"Why are you twisting your head all about?" asked the fox.

"Oh my!" shouted the quail. "I see wolves, thousands of wolves, coming toward us from all directions."

"Wolves?!" barked the fox, and he took to his heels.

"Wait, wait!" the quail called. "Why are you scared? Did you not just say that all animals shall live in peace?"

"Yes, I did," cried the fox, "but how do I know whether those wolves know it?" And with that, the fox ran away.



Things to Do *after* Reading the Story

Even though quail can be fox's prey, the bird in this story escapes death by "outfoxing" the fox. Think up your own story where one character must use its head, and not violence, to escape a dangerous situation.

The Bored Wizard

by Carolyn Kane

Things to Do *before* Reading the Story
Why is a wizard an interesting character? If you were a wizard, what kinds of things would you do with your magic?

Maximilian M. Maxwell was bored. He was the greatest wizard in the world, but lately he had grown tired of magic. He tried to find something exciting to do. He turned a frog into a flying elephant and changed four mice into a rock-and-roll band. Then he went out into the enchanted forest, captured forty dragons, harnessed them to his chariot, and drove to the moon and back. But he was still bored.

"I want to do something different," he said to his nephew, Oliver. "So I've decided to give up magic. We'll leave this forest and live like ordinary people."

"Good! Let's go today," said Oliver, who had always wanted to travel. "But, Uncle Max, do you really know how to be an ordinary man? I've read books about ordinary people, and I think they're different from wizards."

"Oh, you and your books," said Maximilian. "I am the greatest wizard in the world. Surely I can get along in an ordinary place full of ordinary people."

Quickly, Oliver and Maximilian prepared for their trip. Oliver grabbed a box of peanut-butter cookies. Maximilian combed his beard with a bat-tooth comb and put on his traveling cape, his magician's hat, and his dragon-skin boots.

"Where's your magic ring?" Oliver asked.

"I *told* you," said the wizard, "I'm leaving it behind. I'm giving up magic."

So they left their castle and, after a long journey, found themselves on the main street of an ordinary town. In front of them was a red traffic light. "Oliver, you're always reading books," said the wizard. "What does that light mean?"

"I think we're supposed to wait until it turns green," said Oliver.

"Nonsense," said Maximilian. "I am the greatest wizard in the world, and no machine can tell me what to do." He stepped into the street.

"Uncle Max," shouted Oliver, "watch *out*!"

The wizard sprang out of the way just as a huge truck roared past. Its wheels splattered mud all over his cape and dragon-skin boots.

"You there," Maximilian shouted at the driver of the truck, "if I had my magic ring, I'd turn you into a frog!"

By that time Oliver and Maximilian had eaten all the peanut-butter cookies and were getting hungry. In a bakery window they saw a sign that said, " Try Our Delicious Strawberry Tarts."

"What a kind invitation," said Maximilian. He hurried into the bakery, took several tarts from the shelf, and began eating them.

"Wait," said Oliver, "You aren't supposed to eat the tarts without paying for them. There are things called dollars and cents—"

"Nonsense!" said Maximilian. "I am the greatest wizard in the world, and I can read a simple sign. It says, " Try Our Delicious Strawberry Tarts", and that's all I'm doing."

"But, Uncle Max," said Oliver wildly, "there are people called police officers—and I think I see one coming right now."

"Officer," shouted the baker, "arrest that man in the cape. He's stealing my tarts!"

Maximilian and Oliver fled through the back door. "What a town!" muttered the wizard. "I'd rather try to tame three dragons, five trolls, and eleven werewolves than try to live with these people!"

The police officer ran after them shouting, "Stop, thief!"

"Quick, Oliver," panted the wizard as he ran, "head for that little car—the one parked at the top of the hill. We'll escape in that."

"But you can't drive, Uncle."

"Nonsense! If I can drive a team of dragons, I can drive this little car." He got into the car and began pushing buttons and jerking the steering wheel from side to side.

"Hurry," said Oliver. "Here comes the police officer."

Without knowing what he was doing, Maximilian released the brake. The car began rolling down the hill, slowly at first but quickly gaining speed. Faster and faster it went, heading straight toward the mayor's house.

"Stop!" cried Oliver. "We'll crash!"

"Kerflam! Whomperoo!" shouted Maximilian.

But no magic words could stop the car. It crashed through the mayor's fence, rolled through his prize-winning tulip garden, and landed with a huge splash in his Olympic-sized swimming pool.

People came running from all directions. "Help!" shouted the mayor. "There's a car in my swimming pool—and a strange man. He ruined my tulips."

"And ate my tarts!" cried the baker.

"And stole my car!" shouted somebody else. "Throw him in jail!"

"Glug! Splut!" Maximilian gasped, clinging to the mayor's favorite inner tube. "Swim, Oliver. Don't let them catch you!"

"But, Uncle Max," said Oliver, "there's something I should tell you." He held out his hand.

The wizard stared. "You're wearing my magic ring!" he exclaimed.

"I thought we might need it," said Oliver. "Are you annoyed with me?"

"Annoyed? Oliver, you're the joy of my life!" He seized the ring, placed it on his finger, and shouted, "Kerflam! Whomperoo!" He and Oliver and the inner tube vanished in a puff of purple smoke and reappeared in Maximilian's castle.

"Home!" said Oliver happily.

The wizard shivered in his wet clothes. "Now that I have my powers back," he said, "I'll turn everyone in that town into a frog!"

But Maximilian was too tired to turn even one person into a frog. Oliver gave him a glass of warm milk and put him to bed. For days afterward no one heard Maximilian M. Maxwell complain about being bored.

Things to Do *after* Reading the Story

Magicians use tricks instead of magic like Maximilian. If you would like to learn some magic tricks, the next time you go to the library, find a book to help you learn. Then try some magic tricks on your family and friends.

The Day Sweeney Ate the Worms

by Casey West

Things to Do *before* Reading the Story
Why do you suppose anyone would eat worms? What was the most unusual thing you ever ate? Why did you try it?

It started like any other day. Get up, get ready, eat breakfast, walk to school, see all your friends in the hall. But this day, although it started out just like that, soon changed—and not for the better.

Sweeney and I were talking in the hall when our sworn enemy, Frank (the guy whose main joy in life was making Sweeney and me crazy), came up to us and said that he had two tickets for the sold-out Titans play-off game. *And he said he couldn't go.*

"Frank, best buddy of mine," I said. "I know someone who can go. I myself can go."

"Me, too," said Sweeney.

"Sorry," Frank said. "Of course, you *can* go. Anyone *can* go. Except me. I have to jet to Florida with my stepmother that weekend."

"Yes, Frank, and we can go to the game."

"No. The people who take these forty-yard-line tickets will have to do more than announce that they are able to attend this most exciting, important, and thrilling game of the season."

"Frank!" I hollered. "I'll do anything! Anything! Give me a ticket!"

"Louis, don't go overboard," Sweeney said. "Calm down."

"I have devised a couple of tests," said Frank, "to see if you two really and truly want these tickets. If you don't, there are plenty of people who do."

"There are no such words as 'not want the tickets,'" I said.

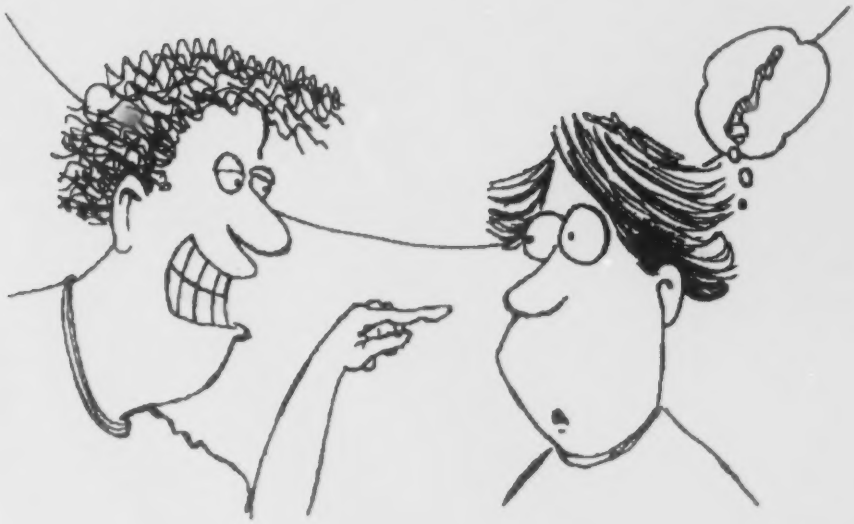
"Well, then, why don't you walk my dog every day this week, Louis?"

"Give me the dog. Give me the leash. Where is he?" I looked around wildly.

"At home, of course. We'll work that out."

"And why don't you give me your math book, and I'll teach you my super method for fractions—the way you're always begging me to," said Sweeney.

"No, no, Sweeney," Frank said. "I have something much more special in mind for you." He snickered. "You're going to eat worms."



"Worms? Oh, no, I'm not."

"O.K. I'll give the ticket to Marlon." Frank turned away.

"Wait! Wait!" Sweeney said. You could see he was trying desperately to remain calm in the face of a hideous disaster.

"I'll have the worms ready for you at noon," said Frank. "If you eat them, you'll get the ticket. If not, you won't. It's just that simple." Frank left.

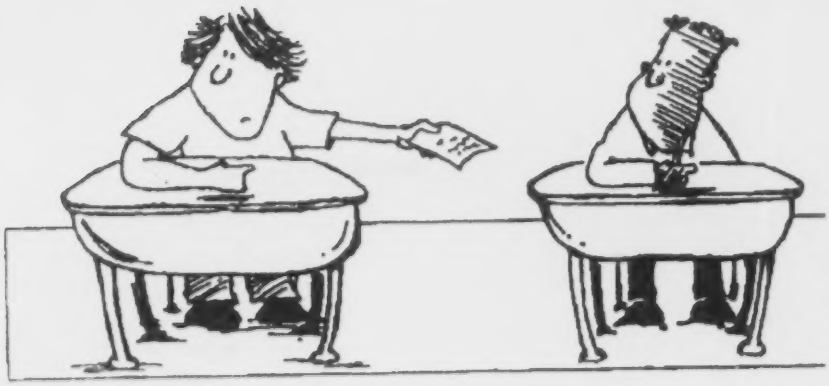
Sweeney couldn't speak. His face was greenish red, like a moldy beet.

"You can't eat worms," I said, "not even for a play-off ticket."

He looked me straight in the eye. "I have to," he said. "How can I not?" He turned away. I ran after Frank. "Listen," I said. "You can't do this—you can't make him eat worms."

"I'm not making him do it. If he doesn't want the ticket, he doesn't have to eat any worms."

Sweeney looked sick as a pup all morning. Then he passed me a note. *I have an idea*, it said. *Meet me after math.*



At recess Sweeney pulled me to the kitchen where he sweet-talked the cook into letting him have a few sticks of spaghetti, which he boiled in a small pot. Then he took them to the art room and painted them, one by one, with blue and gray paints, adding some touches of red here and there. It was sickening. Those "worms" looked a lot like worms.

"Man," I said. "Frank will never know the difference."

At noon we found ourselves in the middle of a crowd on the playground. Apparently the word had gotten out that Sweeney was going to eat worms for a play-off ticket, and everyone gathered around.

Frank stood in the middle of the circle, holding his can of worms high. "If he can do this, he'll earn the ticket," he said, obviously enjoying the spotlight.

I was once again extremely glad that all I had to do was walk Frank's peek-a-poo.

Sweeney winked at me. He had on his baggies, and I could see a bulge in his back pocket—the painted spaghetti. But how would he substitute it?

Then I saw. Sweeney walked calmly up to Frank, took the can, and held it high over his head with his right hand. Then he stuck his left hand into the back pocket while everyone was looking at the can, worms tumbling over the edges—and as he reached into the can, he plopped the spaghetti on top, took out a "worm," and popped it into his mouth.

"Um," he said, rubbing his stomach. "That was great."

"Oh, yeah?" Frank said, his face red and eyes bulging.

"Eat one more."

"Who says?"

"I say. It's my ticket."

"Only one more," Sweeney said.

"As many as I say," said Frank.

But everyone else started saying things like, "Two is enough. Two is plenty, man."

Sweeney held the can high again, supposedly reaching in for a worm. He grabbed one, stuck it in his mouth, and chomped down on it.

His face. Oh, it was an awful sight. His eyes were wide, his mouth clamped shut. But I knew what was running through his mind. He couldn't spit it out—there would go the ticket. He could admit the first one was fake—there would go the ticket.

I saw his jaw work. I saw his Adam's apple go up and down. I saw his eyes bulge and his face turn a putrid shade of olive-green.

I felt my own stomach heave into a knot. And I admired the heck out of him for not throwing up.

Everyone shouted and clapped, and Frank handed over the ticket, his mouth tight around the edges.

Sweeney walked very fast back to the school.

I didn't ask him what happened next. I didn't want to know, and he definitely didn't want to talk about it.

Sweeney took the rest of the afternoon off, complaining to the school nurse about an upset stomach, and his face was green all week.

I walked Frank's peek-a-poo in her rhinestone collar up and down the streets every night, ducking behind bushes and garbage cans when I thought I saw someone I knew.

But when Sweeney's dad had dropped us at the stadium and we were in our forty-yard-line seats and the Titans won in overtime, 33 to 30, we were so happy that even I would have gladly eaten a worm.

Well, maybe.

Things to Do *after* Reading the Story

Talk about something you want badly enough that you would be willing to eat worms.

We hope you have had fun with these stories!

Part II
Guidelines for Parents

Folktales for Family Fun

Do you remember the story of Peter Rabbit, who went into Mr. McGregor's garden despite his mother's warning: "Your father went into the garden and never came out"? As you may recall, Peter disobeyed his mother, went into Mr. McGregor's garden, and almost lost his life.

The Tale of Peter Rabbit has all the ingredients of a good folktale: memorable characters, easily understood events, and a clear moral (obey your mother and stay out of trouble). The simplicity and the reassuring morality of folktales make them great favorites of children and adults. That's the reason they appear often in every school literature program. At home, folktales can be read and then retold as often as your child enjoys retelling them or hearing them. Besides, when you read folktales at home, you give your child a background for school reading.

As the word "folktales" suggests, these are tales told by common people. They started as spoken stories, not written ones. Now, of course, we may read folktales because they are collected in books, such as *Fables from Aesop*, *Household Stories of the Brothers Grimm*, *The People Could Fly*, and the *Tales of Uncle Remus*, but their language remains folksy, talkable, sometimes regional. Folktales are found in every culture, and different versions of those tales are usually available through your library.

Folktales often started with real people, good guys and bad guys. As their exploits were told and retold, the original story was modified to make it more interesting or more humorous. That's the reason that many folktales present larger-than-life characters and very unusual happenings. These stories are sometimes called legends. As people told them around the fireside and in the bars, they became more eye-popping or side-splitting to impress the listening audience. Think of Paul Bunyan, for example, and Babe, his enormous blue ox. Together, in one afternoon, they could dig a hole big enough to hold Lake Superior.

Though the means of telling stories has shifted today from family and neighborhood storytellers to radio and television, the source of folktales remains constant—that is, the antics and the heroics of everyday life. They describe real people, use unusual events or humor to resolve a problem, tell the story with common spoken language, and make a point about life.

One class of second graders in Shreveport, Louisiana, figured out those characteristics after reading and discussing some folktales. Then they interviewed grandmas and uncles and other elders to see if there were any folktale-type stories in the family. Here is one story titled "The Mountain Lion" from that second-grade class.

> When my great-grandfather was courting my great-grandmother, he had to hike a long way through the woods to visit her at her home. On the way back through the woods to his home one evening, he heard a mountain lion tracking him. There are mountain lions in the woods of central Pennsylvania. Finally, my great-grandfather came face-to-face with that lion.

He got a big stick and thumped the ground. Thinking that he had best not turn his back on the lion, he stared that animal in the eyes and walked backwards until the lion finally got tired or bored and went away and left him alone. My great-grandfather was glad the lion was apparently not very hungry.

Those second-grade children learned a lot about their families when they asked for family tales. They laughed or became proud or better understood their families as a result. Reading literature, reading stories and books, has that benefit. It gives us time to think about life and to decide how we are going to live it.

Studs Terkel once commented that people want to talk about their lives, provided they feel that the listener is interested in them. Parents can instill this interest in their children by demonstrating that the lives of real people—people that their children know, respect, and love—are just as important as what they read in books. Folktales give parents the opportunity to discuss the lives of real people with their children.

Questions from Parents

All parents have questions and need answers about their children. Here are some questions that other parents have asked.

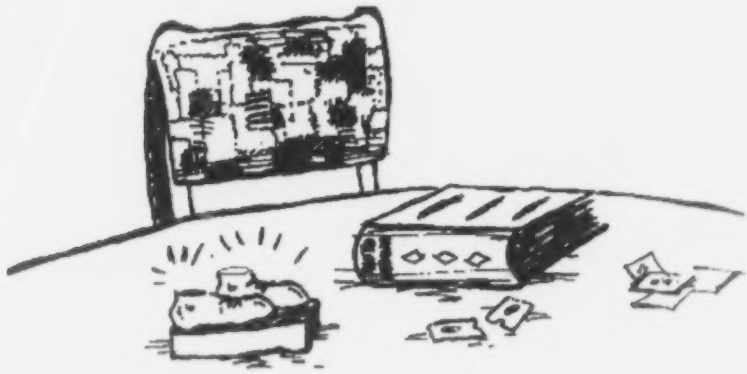
My children do not have many opportunities to know grandparents and relatives very well because of the distance we live from them. We exchange pictures, letters, phone calls, and visits when possible. How can I give my children a sense of "family" under these circumstances?

Because we are a mobile society, many families experience the same problem—we no longer all "settle" ourselves in one area. More often, our jobs, careers, and sometimes even our health determine where we must live. When our families live far away, it is important that we help our children develop a sense of family.

You can begin by sharing stories from your childhood with your children . Then ask them to think of incidents and stories from "when they were little." Tell stories about family members that live far away. These stories are not only sources of entertainment, but they are opportunities to bond families together.

When your extended family does gather, encourage your relatives to share their own stories, for instance, a time they were in danger and then were saved, or the story of a child who learned a lesson after making a mistake. Later, you may want to encourage your children to write the stories down and illustrate them so that they can be read over and over again.

One of the best sources for helping your children remember family members is a family photo album. Ask them to try and identify all of the people pictured. Encourage your children to use holiday or special family gatherings to find out more about old photos and to collect the stories connected to them for their scrapbooks or albums. Some children might like to write captions for the photos, just as newspapers do for their pictures.

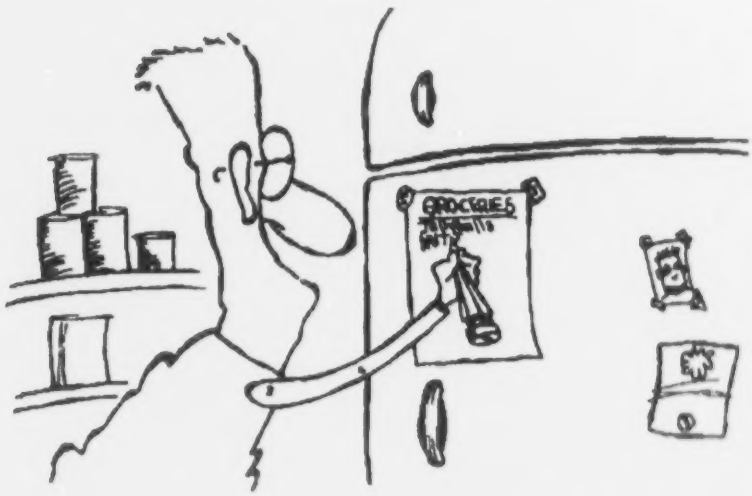


Family memories come in many sizes, shapes, and colors, like Aunt Milly's quilts, George's baby shoes, theater ticket stubs from your parents' first date, and photographs from the past. Of the hundreds of possessions that pass through your family, it might be fun to save a few. They remind us of the person(s) who used or made them and the stories connected to them.

We have books, paper, and pencils in our home, but my children do not use them very often. How can I encourage them to use these things without always making a big deal about it?

- First, make them visible and put them where your children can reach them easily. Children are creative enough to come up with their own ideas and activities as long as the materials are handy. Put paper and books in play areas so children can use them during playtime. Writing out a menu for dinner, writing notes, labeling their toys, writing out bank statements and checks, writing prescriptions, and posting signs on doors, such as Doctor's Office, Police Station, Bank, and Grocery Store are things children can write when they play and pretend.
- It will help if you get into the act yourself. When there are books by your child's bed or by your favorite easy chair, you are more likely to read at bedtime. If your children come to you for a goodnight kiss and hug or you take your children to bed, keep the books handy so that reading before bedtime is easy to do.

- Keep a bag of books and paper in the car for traveling. Some of us spend time driving kids back and forth between games, practices, and after-school events. Young children who go with you to run these errands can pass the time reading, looking at picture books, and writing. When there are doctor and dentist appointments, bring in your bag of books and papers so they will have something to do in the waiting room.



- Remember, you are a model for your children. When you read and write at home, whether it is leisure reading, letter writing, making shopping lists, writing dates and activities on calendars, paying bills, or writing notes, encourage your children to read and write with you. Let them know that reading and writing are important aspects of daily life. When you truly value reading and writing, then it is easy to provide opportunities for your children.

Activities for Folktale Fun

As parents, we are looking for activities that will benefit our children. Try some of the following activities and enjoy the fun of folktales with your children.

Get Your Act Together

- Together with some friends or family, decide on a legend or folktale you enjoy. Dress up and act out the story yourselves or use puppets.

Write It Again, Sam

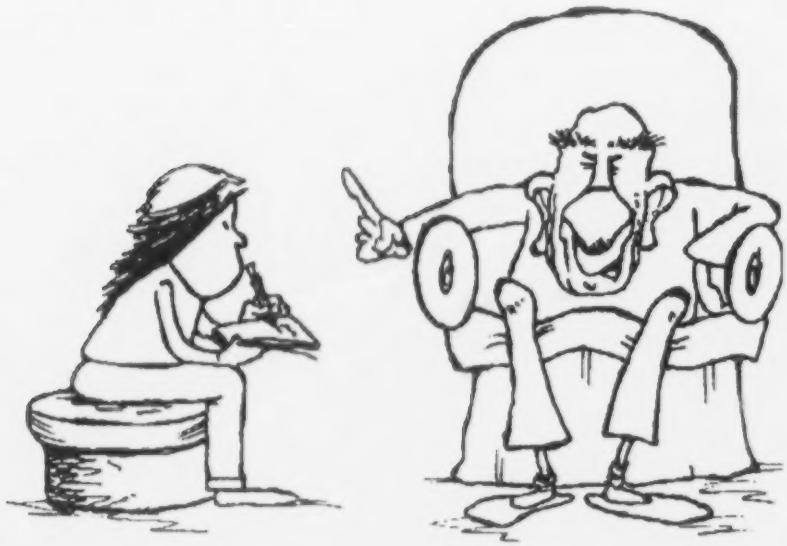
- Find a favorite fairy tale. Rewrite the story, not from the main character's point of view, but from the point of view of someone else in the story. For example, tell the story of Cinderella the way the Fairy Godmother saw it happen, or one of the stepsisters.

Those Were the Days

- Have your children interview some of their grandparents or a neighbor who is an older person. Find out what their lives were like when they were children. Ask about their games, school, what they did for fun, how much money they had to spend, or a story they remember about their childhood.

Local Adventures

- Many communities have legends or tales about different places in the area. Your local librarian can help you locate materials on the subject of local folklore. After you find something that is of interest to you and your children, read about it. Then plan an outing to this site.



Parenting's Best-Kept Secret: Reading to Your Children

by Barbara Bush

Jenifer Reilly, of Basalt, Colorado, began reading to her daughter Abby shortly after she was born. At first, the infant chewed on the book covers and drooled over the pages. Jenifer didn't mind. She even let Abby sleep with her books. By the time Abby was one, she loved books. She'd nestle on her mother's lap and listen wide-eyed as Jenifer read about snow children and dancing bears. When she started to walk, Abby often sat next to the family's Labrador with an upside-down book in hand, reading to the dog.

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Like Abby's mother, I read to all my children—just as my parents read to me, and as I now read to my 12 grandchildren. Reading aloud is one of the best-kept secrets of good parenting. It has tremendous impact on a young mind and gives youngsters a head start on their education. Children like Abby, educators say, can be 2½ years ahead in reading readiness when they enter kindergarten.

Children often gain more than learning skills, however. Reading teaches sharing and involvement. It brings families together and makes children feel loved. When I read to groups of children at schools and libraries across the country, without any prompting one or two will climb up and sit on my lap. The rest, sitting on the floor, will squeeze forward, crowding around my feet.

To help you start a family read-aloud program, here are a few tips from my own experience and some that I've pick up from others involved in literacy programs.

1. **Get started now.** You can't begin too soon. Carol Brown read to her son, Hanson, shortly after she brought him home from the hospital. Over the next few years, she read him book after book.

By the time Hanson was in kindergarten, he read on his own, even though he was severely learning disabled. Eventually his reading skills leveled off. Today school is hard for him, but he continues to love and enjoy books. "For Hanson," says his mother, "I know that reading to him all those years made an enormous difference."

The important thing is to start reading aloud.

2. ***Make reading aloud a habit.*** Years ago, I usually read to my children at bedtime. Most evenings, we'd snuggle together with a few favorite books. The kids—Jeb, George, Neil, Marvin, and Dorothy—came to love this special time. They learned passages from their favorite books by heart, which we'd recite together.

It doesn't matter when you read—but it is helpful to do it at the same time each day, for at least 15 minutes. Many parents have told me they've found the dishes and housework can wait. Reading is more important because it can lead to a better, more productive life.

Over 20 years ago, University of Illinois researcher Dolores Durkin studied 205 children who learned to read before starting school. They had one thing in common: their parents made reading to them a habit.

3. ***Involve the whole family.*** Children enjoy being read to by people besides their mothers. Many people read to me when I was little: my father, a brother, a grandmother, even friends barely older than I.

Today, both parents often work and may not be able to read as frequently as they'd like. Babysitters, child-care providers, and older siblings can sometimes help by reading to their charges.

George doesn't get much chance to read to our grandchildren in Washington, but he does better when we're away in Kennebunkport, Maine. Each morning at six o'clock, the grandchildren race into our room, bounce into bed with us, and wave their favorite books. "Read this!" one pleads. "No," another one begs, "read mine." Often it's George who begins our morning reading time.

Children like it when the men in their family read to them. Educators hear this over and over around the country. When a girl in elementary school chose a book on football, her teacher asked why. "My dad likes football," the student explained. "Maybe he'll read it to me." He did—and he continued to read to her.

4. ***Keep books handy.*** Research shows that growing up in a house filled with books often helps a child become an early reader.

For my grandchildren, I keep stacks of books at Camp David, at Kennebunkport, and at the White House. There are Bible stories, Barbara Cooney's *Miss Rumphius*, Martin Handford's picture book *Where's Waldo?*, and several nearly worn-out copies of *Old Mother West Wind* stories by Thornton W. Burgess, which I treasured as a child.

A home library need not be expensive. Low-priced children's books are available even in supermarkets. You can watch for garage sales, trade books with other families, and ask relatives to give books as gifts. The best bargain, of course, is at the country's 15,000 public libraries—where the books are free.

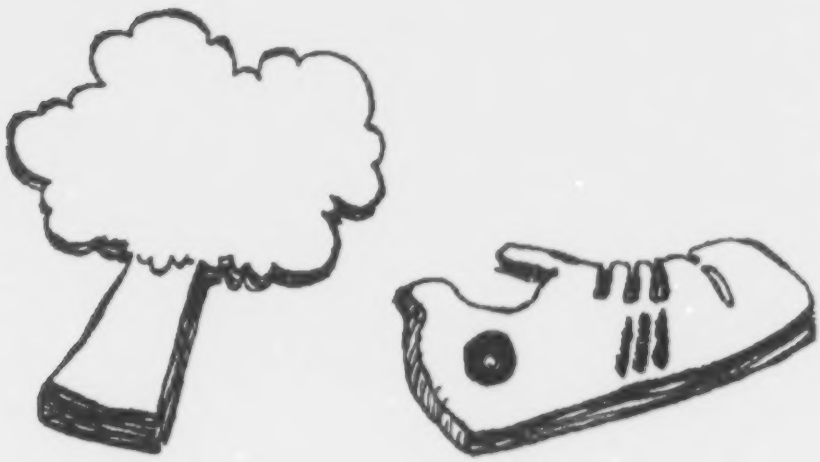
5. ***Choosing the good books.*** One day, when my granddaughter Noelle was very young, she suddenly blurted, "I just *love* Moses." "Oh, really," I said. "Who was Moses?" She had no idea; he was simply someone she associated with Sunday school. So I got some books on Moses and read her stories about him. Then she really *did* love Moses.

Children need books appropriate for their interests, their ages, and their ability, educators say. They also need variety, so experts suggest we read *different things* to our children—newspapers, magazines, street signs, even the backs of cereal boxes. That way we show the importance of words in every aspect of life.

Youngsters love to hear the same stories over and over. I read Robert McCloskey's *Make Way for Ducklings* so many times to my children and grandchildren that the book fell apart. Repetition improves vocabulary and memory, and helps children understand how stories work.

Here are some helpful guidelines from experts for choosing books:

- Infants and toddlers (to age three) enjoy simple picture and story books about familiar objects. The shapes and colors draw a child's attention.



- Preschoolers (ages three to six) like action books, fantasy stories, poems, and tales about animals and everyday experiences. Books with catchy refrains or lines that a child can repeat are especially useful.
- Young readers (ages six to nine) enjoy books about their hobbies and interests. Read books that are more challenging than those they are starting to read on their own.
- Older children (ages nine to 12) go for humor, folk tales, longer poems, classics like Huckleberry Finn, and more complex stories. Mysteries are also popular.

6. ***Make the written word come alive.*** In reading to my children and grandchildren, I always try to *involve* them. In the middle of a sentence, I'll leave out a word and wait for a child to supply it. I also ask questions. "*Now* what do you think will happen?" I might wonder out loud. And I read *all* the words, explaining any that might be unfamiliar.

One night, as I was reading a new story of Babar, the good-hearted king of elephants, a little voice stopped me in midsentence: "What do elephants eat?" The others chimed in. "Yes! What?" Suddenly, the children's imaginations took flight. I knew then they were totally involved and that reading, for them, had become an adventure.

To make your reading lively, first spark your children's interest. Before you read a new book, let the youngsters study the cover. Ask what they see and what they think the book is about. Next, point out interesting pictures or characters. When you're finished, ask what the youngsters liked best about the story or how they would change the ending.

This kind of "active" reading stimulates language development and encourages original thinking. A study by the State University of New York at Stony Brook found that preschool children whose parents read to them in an active, involving way tested six to eight months ahead of other children.

7. ***Keep reading to them after they can read for themselves.*** Many experts suggest reading to your children through the eighth grade. Until age 12, most children's listening comprehension is much higher than their reading compre-hension—so they get more out of hearing a book. Reading to older children also enables you to introduce books they might not explore on their own.

I continued reading to my children as much as possible, and sometimes, I'd have them read to me. As a child, Marvin always did. When he was young and droned on with no feeling, it was hard to sit and listen. But later, on vacation, after Marvin turned 16, he and I took turns reading the James Herriot books. I'd read one chapter, then do needlepoint while he read to me—with feeling and interest.

Get a child hooked on reading, and its joy will last a lifetime. Ray Joseph was only two when his parents started reading to him. By the time he was eight, Ray was reading in bed with a flashlight. "You'll be too tired in the morning," his father told him. But Ray persisted, so his parents bought him a nightlight and allowed him to stay up reading an extra 15 minutes every evening. Today, at age 44, Ray ends each day reading in bed. So do I, and so will countless others—as long as there are people who want to bring books and children together.

Books for Parents and Children

On the following pages you will find a list of magazines and books for parents and children. The books are divided into different categories to aid your selection. Under *Books for Parents* we have included a few books of folktales that you can read. Perhaps you would like to choose a folktale and put it into your own words and tell it to your children.

Books to Read Together lists books that parents can read to their children. Those books and *Books for Children to Read by Themselves* have been divided according to age groups. The divisions are only general guidelines. You should be able to find these books in your local public library or at most bookstores.

Books for Parents

The Jack Tales by Richard Chase. An assortment of folktales from Southern Appalachia. These stories about a character named Jack have been told by storytellers for many generations.

The Random House Book of Fairy Tales adapted by Amy Ehrlich. Presents a collection of best-known fairy tales. Includes "Red Riding Hood," "Jack and the Beanstalk," "Hansel and Gretel," "Snow White," and "Thumbelina."

The Complete Tales of Uncle Remus by Joel Chandler Harris. Compiled by folklorist Richard Chase, this volume contains songs, sayings, stories, ballads, tales, legends, and short stories.

Favorite Tales from Grimm illustrated by Mercer Mayer. The stories in this work were collected by the famous German scholars and folklorists, the brothers Grimm. Contains "Rumpelstiltskin," "The Bremen Town Musicians," "Rapunzel," and "Cinderella."

Also consider these other books:

Homespun: Tales from America's Favorite Storytellers edited by Jimmy Neil Smith.

Talk That Talk: An Anthology of African-American Storytelling edited by Linda Goss and Marian E. Barnes.

Favorite Folktales from Around the World edited by Jane Yolen.

Books to Read Together

Ages 4-6

Tomie dePaola's Favorite Nursery Tales by Tomi dePaola. This collection contains fairy tales, poems, folktales and fables. Includes The Frog Prince, The Three Little Pigs, The Three Billy Goats Gruff, The Fox and the Grapes, The Tortoise and the Hare, and many others. Full of delightful illustrations.

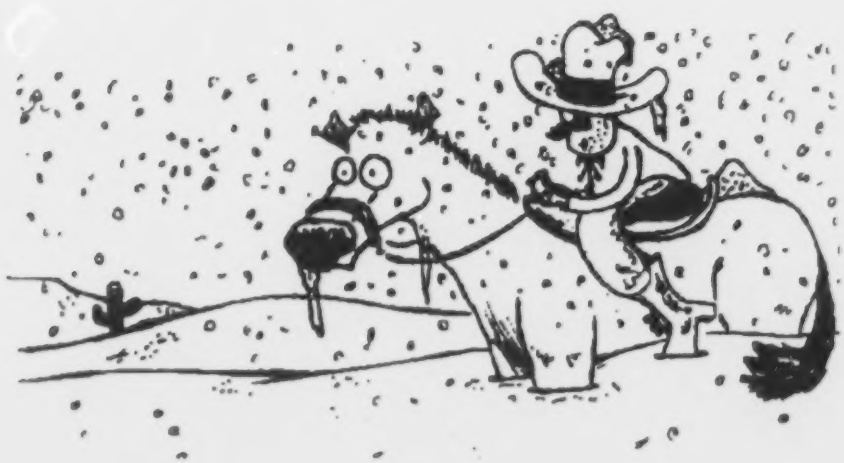
This Little Pig Went to Market by Norah Montgomerie. Presents a large selection of games, finger plays, counting rhymes, songs, and poems. Includes short narratives to explain the actions.

Why the Crab Has No Head by Barbara Knutson. An African tale from the Bakongo people of Zaire explains why a crab does not have a head and why it walks sideways. Illustrations are in black and white, and resemble woodcuts.

Ages 6-8

Tikki Tikki Tembo retold by Arlene Mosel. Tikki tikki tembo-no sa rembo-chari bari ruchi-pip peri pembo falls in a well. There is delay in his rescue because it takes so long to repeat his name. After he is safe, the family decides to use short names for their children. Good to read aloud; children enjoy repeating the name.

The Blizzard of 1896 by E. J. Bird. In 1896 the Old West was hit with a fierce blizzard. This book contains ten tall tales filled with humor and adventure that describe what happened to some of the people and animals during this powerful snowstorm.



C3

Flumbra by Gudrun Helgadottir. An Icelandic tale about a giantess named Flumbra and her children. Iceland's environment, earthquakes, volcanoes, and other events of nature are caused by Flumbra's behavior.

Ages 8-10

Mister King by Raija Siekkinen. A gentle king lives in a beautiful castle filled with poetry, story, and song. He is very lonely until people move into his province. He discovers companionship and the joy of caring for others. Includes beautiful watercolor illustrations.

A Drop of Honey by Djemma Bider. An Armenian tale describes a girl's dream about a ruckus which occurs in the market because of a drop of honey. Suggests that small arguments can develop into big problems. Includes a recipe for baklava.

Books for Your Children to Read by Themselves

Ages 4-6

Ring Around a Rosy by Jenny Williams. Includes traditional rhymes for children. Illustrations explain the actions that match the rhymes.

The Helen Oxenbury Nursery Rhyme Book, rhymes chosen by Brian Alderson. Contains over fifty nursery rhymes. This collection covers a variety of popular and nontraditional rhymes. Illustrations accompany each lyric.

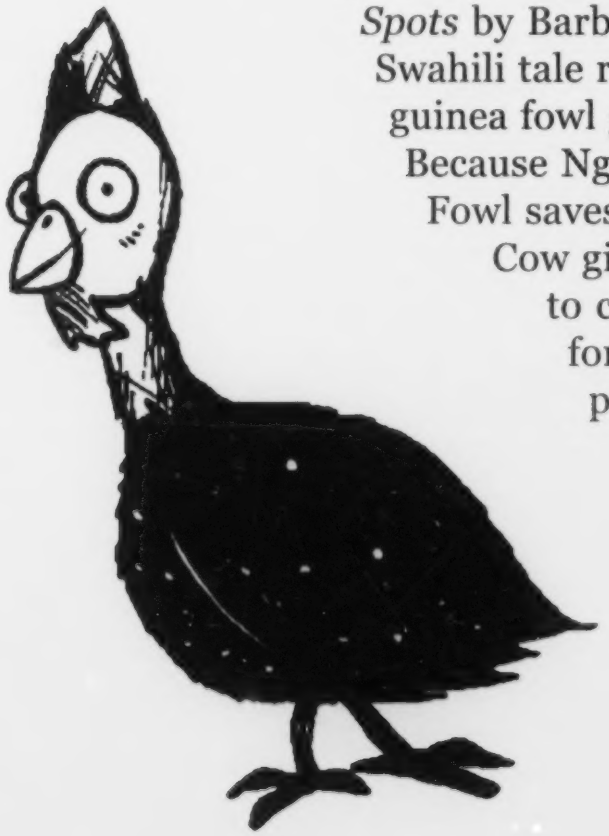
One, Two, Buckle My Shoe by Jenny Williams. Rhymes in this collection deal with counting. Presents sequences one to five, one to ten, and the reverse order five to one, ten to one, and counting by twos.

Ages 6-8

Tony's Bread by Tomie dePaola. Explains the creation of panettone, sweet Italian bread in a flowerpot shape. Contains humor, romance, history, and creativity.

The Curious Faun by Raija Siekkinen. One curious faun decides to venture into the land of people to determine why they have no joy. The faun discovers the lives of people are filled with many cares. He decides to stay, weaving music into people's thoughts, which often causes them to say "How Curious."

How the Guinea Fowl Got Her Spots by Barbara Knutson. A Swahili tale reveals how a guinea fowl got its spots. Because Nganga the Guinea Fowl saves Cow from death, Cow gives Nganga spots to camouflage herself for future protection.



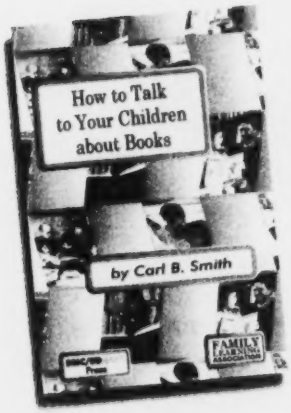
Ages 8-10

Beauty and the Beast retold by Marianna Mayer. Beauty must live with the Beast to spare her father from death. She must "look deep into others' beauty to find her happiness." Exquisite illustrations convey the magic and mystery of this haunting tale.

John Henry, An American Legend by Ezra Jack Keats. John Henry's strength compares to no other man around. He uses this strength to save lives and to work hard on the new railroad. However, one day John Henry challenges a machine. He wins the contest, but it costs him his life.

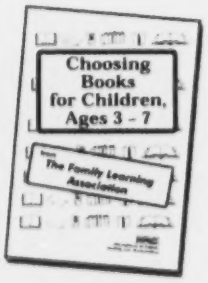
Chuck Wagon Stew by E. J. Bird. Meet Miss Lily, big Al, Old Three Toes, Owl Feather, and Big Red in these tall tales from the Old West. Contains an assortment of stories describing outlaws, gamblers, cowboys, and wild animals who lived in the west when it was young and wild.

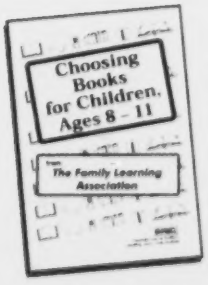
If you found this book useful, please try these other helpful books !



How to Talk to Your Children about Books *by Carl B. Smith*
Start a conversation that will last a lifetime. This book teaches you five easy techniques to prompt book discussions, guidelines for selecting books, how to make it a two-way exchange, plus motivation, values, and making it fun!

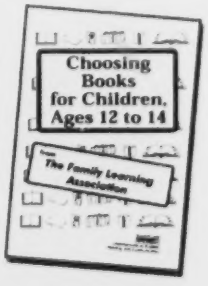
Choosing Books for Children, Ages 3 to 7
Use this resource to appeal to a variety of interests in your kindergarten to primary-age children. Filled with great tips for keeping book conversations going, this book pinpoints a vast array of age-appropriate reading materials.





Choosing Books for Children, Ages 8 to 11
Quick summaries of a huge collection of titles will make it easy to provide good reading for your pre-teens. Top-notch authors, relevant themes, and sensitive issues make this a good companion at the library or bookstore.

Choosing Books for Children, Ages 12 to 14
Let literature open up discussion about some of the difficult issues your teen is experiencing. Includes a special section on communicating about books though writing and journaling.



For information about these and other helpful books, contact:
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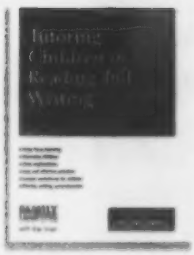
Other Resources Available



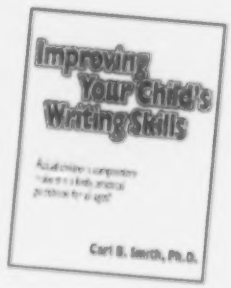
Tutoring Children in Reading and Writing

Book 1: Kindergarten
Book 2: Grades 1-2

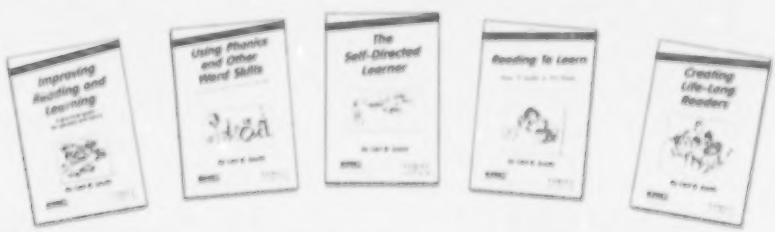
These guidebooks use a hands-on approach to helping children improve essential skills. Using easy and effective activities, they focus on the building blocks of reading and writing with sample worksheets that focus on letter recognition, spelling, phonics, and comprehension.

Improving Your Child's Writing Skills

Using actual children's compositions, this fun guidebook takes kids through the entire process of writing, from Pre-Writing and Drafting to Revising and Proofreading. The practical work sheets form a framework to hone the skills of any young writer.



Helping Children to Learn SERIES



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